

Renowned St. Joseph's School for the Deaf has students learn through baseball, Yankee Stadium trip

BY WAYNE COFFEY

DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

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Sometimes you don't have to go far to find yourself in another world. Sometimes you only have to go five miles, from one corner of the Bronx to another, from one borough landmark to another. Just ask Christian Gonzalez about that. He is an 8-year-old kid with a skinny body and quick mind and a sweet, high-pitched giggle and he was sitting on a bench outside Yankee Stadium on Friday morning, waiting to go on a Stadium tour with six classmates from St. Joseph's School for the Deaf.



Fourth-grade students from St. Joseph's School for the Deaf enjoy... (Michael Schwartz for News)

Christian had a question, kind of an urgent one, for his teacher, Courtney Feldman. He communicated it in sign language.

"Can I slide into second base?"

Feldman smiled and signed back, saying she didn't think that would be possible. Christian Gonzalez, in a striped blue shirt, looked a bit deflated but took it well and soon he and his fourth-grade mates were in the Great Hall with their teachers, Feldman and Adriana Vasquez, beginning a great one-hour adventure, kids who come from places of deprivation and hardship and a narrowly drawn world, venturing into a massive sporting showplace, shimmering in moneyed splendor.

You never saw wider eyes, or fresher perceptions.

"There are so many chairs," Christian Gonzalez said, as he scanned the three decks of seats.

"There must a billion baseballs here," said Jeffrey Soto Jr., 9, checking out the historic ball collection in the museum.

"I like the spinklers (watering the outfield grass)," said Kaila Gathers, 9, wowed at how far the water sprayed.



Elhadji Ndoye reads the Jackie Robinson plaque at Monument Park at Yankee Stadium (Photo by Michael Schwartz for News

The Yankees, of course, are big on their tradition and their history, but



they are a startup compared with the St. Joseph's School for the Deaf, which has been educating deaf children in the Bronx since 1869 and has been in its current location, a stately brick building hard by the Hutchinson Parkway and Cross Bronx Expressway, for almost a century.

In the entryway of St. Joseph's, there is a quote from the Christian theologian, John Wesley: "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can."

Feldman - a production assistant for Don Imus in her previous vocational life - aims to do the good she can in Room 330 of St. Joseph's, with a pink rug in the reading corner and three big windows overlooking the Cross Bronx.

"The kids are always amazed at the traffic," Feldman said with a laugh.